

Integrating Freight in the Planning Process

Problem: Freight Transportation is Projected to Increase Significantly

The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that by 2020 the Nation's transportation system will handle cargo valued at almost \$30 trillion, compared with \$9 trillion today. Volumes, in tons, will increase by nearly 70 percent over current levels of 15 billion tons. International freight volumes are growing faster than domestic volumes and will almost double by 2020. These huge increases in freight movement will place even greater demands on the Nation's transportation system. There are many strategies needed to address the challenges surrounding the projected growth of freight transportation. One critical area where FHWA is supporting our partners is in freight professional development.

Putting it in Perspective:

- To successfully address freight, there is a growing need for freight transportation expertise in States and metropolitan areas - to essentially enhance the "freight professional capacity" in the transportation community. Few States or MPOs, for example, have a dedicated freight coordinator.
- At the same time, there is a need to successfully integrate freight into the planning process and resulting products. This requires input from a variety of traditional and nontraditional public and private stakeholders (State DOTs, MPOs, shippers, freight carriers, economic development agencies, general public - to name a few). Since private sector involvement is key to the success of freight planning efforts, special strategies are necessary to successfully engage them.

Solution: Improve Freight Professional Knowledge

To enhance freight professional capacity and to successfully integrate freight into the transportation planning process, the FHWA Offices of Planning, Freight Management and Operations, and the FHWA Resource Center developed several strategies and approaches. One initiative was the development and delivery of a Freight Professional Development Program (FPD) with the objectives of developing an institutional underpinning for freight at the local, State and corridor levels; fostering intermodal approaches to advancing freight

productivity and security; engaging private sector stakeholders in the project development process and improving freight planning and decision-making at the State and MPO levels. An FPD website was launched in 2003 to provide online resources, including a Resource Library available at <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/FPD/index.asp>.

In addition to the FPD initiative, the Office of Freight Operations, in partnership with other modal administrations at USDOT, developed a Freight Analysis Framework (FAF). Both a database and policy analytical tool, the FAF is aimed at helping decision-makers understand the geographic relationships between domestic and international trade flows and the Nation's intermodal transportation system. The FAF forecasts freight volumes on a national and statewide basis for the years 2010-2020 for truck, rail, water, and air shipments. By using this tool, State and local government and the private sector can determine which transportation corridors are or will become heavily congested in the future and better plan solutions to help alleviate these bottlenecks in the intermodal transportation network. More information on the FAF is available at <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight>. In 2004, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics released another freight analytical tool, the GeoFreight CD. Developed jointly within USDOT, GeoFreight a tool that uses a routing model to assign data on freight flows to various components of the transportation network. More information on GeoFreight is available at <http://www.bts.gov>.

Several Key Freight Transportation Challenges

Congestion; Expanding capacity, improving systems operations; Planning and financing freight projects; Safety; National security; Environmental effects of freight transport; and Building freight professional capacity.

The Office of Freight Operations, in partnership with the Office of Planning, also has a number of joint initiatives underway, designed to promote the integration of freight in the planning process. These include a joint Freight Planning website designed to provide transportation planners with a variety of online resources in order to make informed decisions regarding freight planning. In addition, a new

"Talking Freight" Netconference Seminar series has been developed that offers focused discussions on key freight issues on a monthly basis via the Internet and telephone. Through technology, the seminar is able to reach a broad range of participants throughout the country. In addition, a Freight Planning Listserv has been created for freight planning practitioners and has over 550 subscribers. It is intended to disseminate information on innovative or best-case practices for meeting metropolitan and statewide freight transportation planning needs.

The Offices of Freight Operations, Planning, and freight specialists at the Resource Center (RC) have also partnered to develop and deliver two new freight courses offered through the National Highway Institute. The Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Process is a 2-day course that is currently available and the Freight Forecasting in Transportation Planning is a 3-day course that will be available in the Winter 2005. In addition to these formal courses, freight specialists at the Resource Center offer tailored technical expertise to State DOTs and MPOs on freight issues. This can include, for example, an assessment of commodity flows within a State, based on results from the FAF and GeoFreight tools. "Ready to go" briefings and seminars are also available on a number of topics, including executive freight seminars, freight planning 101, intermodal freight trends and building effective public and private partnerships. In addition, seminars on freight data, engaging the private sector on freight planning, and developing freight studies are also under development and will begin to be delivered in early Fall 2004. The Resource Center has also sponsored conferences and workshops designed to foster an awareness of freight by transportation decision-makers. For example, in 2002, a conference was held in Jacksonville, FL where decisionmakers from over 15 State Departments of Transportation, FHWA Division offices, and private sector organizations were brought together to highlight the importance of freight transportation and to develop and discuss strategies for more effectively incorporating freight in the planning processes.

Successful Applications: States' Results Demonstrate Success

Several States and MPOs have engaged the private sector and elevated freight needs in their overall discussion of, and planning for, transportation infrastructure investments.

Puget Sound Region of Washington State

Federal and State planning laws mandate regional transportation planning for both personal and freight mobility. The Puget Sound region is home of the FAST Corridor and the Regional Freight Mobility Roundtable. The Seattle-Tacoma region formed the Freight Mobility Roundtable in 1994 as a joint venture by PSRC and the Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County. Originally created to assist with the freight element of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Roundtable has advised PSRC on their freight data collection efforts, helped to put together a list of short-term improvement projects, and has made efforts to educate other members of the freight community about the MPO planning process. The FAST Corridor partnership is co-sponsored by the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Puget Sound Regional Council. The partnership includes affected cities

and counties, ports, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads. The innovative and sustained regional work on FAST has earned support from the State legislature and Congress. FAST has contributed to the creation of new State and Federal funding programs for freight mobility. Both partnerships are nationally recognized and continue to define and recommend actions serving freight mobility needs in and through the central Puget Sound region of Washington State.

Regional Goods Movement Study for the San Francisco Bay Area

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission is the MPO for the region encompassing the cities and suburbs of San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose. To address private freight sector concerns and to provide them with a voice in the planning process, the MTC formed the Freight Advisory Council. A consortium of interests including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Port of Oakland, the Economic Development Alliance for Business (EDAB), the Bay Area Council (BAC) and others are pooling resources for a study of the goods movement industry in the nine-county Bay Area and central San Joaquin County. As part of the study, a thorough analysis of goods movement in the San Francisco Bay Area, including its relationship with the economy, land use patterns, and transportation infrastructure will be conducted. Additionally, the study will identify a range of solutions that will be considered for inclusion in the next long-range transportation.

Benefits:

These multi-faceted strategies will assist State DOTs and MPOs staffs in gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the challenges arising from the increasing flow of freight on the Nation's transportation system. Ultimately, this will result in improved transportation planning.

Additional Resources

Executive Freight Seminar
(available, contact Resource Center, Planning Team)

Developing MPO Freight Studies
(available Fall 2004, contact Resource Center, Planning Team)

Freight Data Seminar
(available Fall 2004, contact Resource Center, Planning Team)

NHI Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Course (new):
<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/default.asp>

NHI Freight Forecasting in Transportation Planning Course (new):
<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/default.asp>

For more information, contact:

Fawn Thompson, FHWA Resource Center
Phone: (404) 562-3917
E-mail: fawn.thompson@fhwa.dot.gov

Scott Johnson, FHWA Office of Freight Management and Operations
Phone: (202) 366-9498
E-mail: scott.johnson@fhwa.dot.gov

Eloise Freeman-Powell, FHWA Office of Planning
Phone: (202) 366-2068
E-mail: eloise.freeman-powell@fhwa.dot.gov